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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 28, 2009

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**FLORIDA HOUSE DEMOCRATS SAY: DON'T REFUSE
FEDERAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUNDS
FOR UNEMPLOYED FAMILIES**

TALLAHASSEE, FL --- Florida House Democrats today urged House Speaker Larry Cretul and other House Republicans to take immediate action to ensure that Florida doesn't reject more than \$1 billion in federal stimulus aid for out-of-work Floridians.

With the unemployment rate at 9.7 percent, Florida is under extreme economic duress due to the slowdown of the real estate market and the global economic recession. In the midst of this crisis, Florida's unemployment trust fund is being drained.

Concerned about the thousands of hard working, middle-class Florida families who will suffer due to unexpected job loss, House Democrats are urging immediate legislative approval of two major actions before the end of the 2009 lawmaking session. Democrats are seeking:

- Approval of legislation that would allow the state to use **\$777 million** in federal Recovery Act money for the rest of the year for an estimated 250,000 people whose benefits would otherwise expire.

- Passage of legislation that would implement the Unemployment Compensation Modernization Incentive program that would provide an additional **\$444 million** for unemployed Floridians. This program would offer benefits to individuals who lose their jobs for certain family circumstances, such as the relocation of a spouse, family illness, or domestic violence.

Measures that would implement these changes have been authored by state senators and have been subject to modest review in the Florida House of Representatives. The House should take immediate steps to pass these bills, including CS/SB 810, CS SB 516, and House Bill 1333 by Representative J.G. Rader (D-Delray Beach).

Florida House Democrats appreciate concerns that have been raised about potential future-year expenses associated with adoption of these changes. However, Florida House Democrats have repeatedly noted that the economic recovery dollars that have been provided by Congress and approved by President Barack Obama are urgently needed to help Florida's economy recover and for families to be able to avoid crushing financial crises due to unemployment during this recession.

Additionally, U.S. Department of Labor officials have again confirmed in a recent correspondence with Representative Kelly Skidmore (D-Boca Raton) that "there is no requirement that the state return any money it if later repeals the provisions" of the Unemployment Compensation Modernization Incentive program.

Representative Skidmore offered these remarks:

"Florida's unemployed and hard-working families should not be denied their full and fair share of economic recovery funds. The Legislature should not penalize people who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own. These dollars will make a real difference to people who are hungry and need rent money. This money can keep a roof over someone's head and stimulate Florida's economy."

ATTACHED TO THIS DOCUMENT are copies of correspondence from Representative Skidmore and from U.S. Department of Labor Deputy Assistant Secretary Douglas F. Small.

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